

Black History Month Local Facts

Mrs. Annie N. Phillips came to Elkhart, Indiana in 1923. The following are excerpts from the personal recordings of Mrs. Annie Phillips from the years 1923 through 1994.

- Blacks could not eat in any public places or stay at any hotels. They could ride on integrated public transportation but could not live past Indiana Avenue.
- Mrs. Juanita Gamble, first black to sing on the radio in the 30's. Rev. D.D. Houston had a program on the radio called The Royal Telephone.
- Mr. Irvin P. Phillips was the first black to work as a custodian at 1st National Bank in the 1940's.
- Mr. Harrison Haynes - first black Executive Director of the Housing Authority.
- Mrs. Druscilla Mallory - first black principal of South Side Elementary, which was later renamed Utery Elementary.
- Mr. Emory Davis - first black mail carrier & first black student to play in the high school band.
- Mrs. Wilma Dean Phillips Washburn - first black to work in the County Treasurer's office.
- Mr. LaVar Johnson - first black male principal at Roosevelt.
- Tom Atkins first black to graduate from high school at the age of 15. Mr. Atkins was the first black president of Indiana Student Body. In May of 1971, he was one of America's 10 Outstanding Young Men of American Lawyers.
- Mrs. Phyllis Davis, Margaret Barnett & Shirley Hill - first blacks to be hired by Miles Laboratories.
- Mrs. Leada Curry - first black to work in the office of the Y.M.C.A.
- Mrs. Mamie Ella Chavis - first black female bank teller at St. Joseph Valley Bank.
- Mr. & Mrs. William Phillips - first blacks to buy a home on the "other" side of Indiana in 1963.
- Mrs. Dorothy Smart - first black female to run for City Clerk.
- Mr. Ernest Verrett - first black manager of A & P Grocery store.
- Mrs. Jean Phillips - first black female to work as a secretary for the Housing Authority.
- Mr. Ray Vinson - first black fireman in 1968. Made Chief Fire Inspector at a later date.
- Mrs. Annie Kimbrough Curry - first black nurse at Elkhart General Hospital.
- Mr. Cornelius Owens - first black police officer in 1961 and the first department Detective.
- Mrs. Loretha Phillips - first black telephone operator.
- First Black Community Center-named Booker T. Washington.
- Mr. Robert Branscomb - first black bank manager of St. Joe Valley Bank.
- Mrs. Loretha Phillips, Gloria Edgerton & Verna Webb - first black teacher to teach special education to children in the Elkhart Community Schools.
- Mr. William Phillips - first black Vice President of NBD Bank; first black Chairman of EGH Board; first black board member of the Elkhart Chamber of Commerce; first black appointed to the Indiana Statewide Health Coordinating Council by Governor Otis Bowen; first black to serve as Commissioner of the Elkhart Housing Authority.
- Mr. Horace Barnett - first black male hired by Miles Laboratories.
- Mr. Curtis Hill - first black Prosecutor of Elkhart County.
- Mr. Arvis Dawson - first black City Council President and first black to run for Mayor of Elkhart, Indiana.
- Mr. Ralph Bean - first black employed for Elkhart Gas Company and the first black to serve as President of the Zoning Board.
- Mr. Jesse Carter - first black County Police & State Trooper.